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Mayor Emanuel Announces Major Expansion of Chicago's Large Lots Program

*Expansion Makes 4,000 City-Owned Properties on West, South Sides Available to Neighbors for \$1;
Builds on Success of Program that has Sold 550 Lots Since 2014 Launch*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced a major expansion of the City's Large Lots land sale program that will expand it into more than 30 communities across Chicago. The program, which sells vacant City-owned land to nearby homeowners for \$1, is expanding to include approximately 4,000 lots on the South and West sides of the city.

"The Large Lots program turns vacant lots into neighborhood assets that benefit neighbors and communities," Mayor Emanuel said. "This program's success is driven by people who are committed to strengthening their communities block by block, and this expansion will create opportunities to strengthen neighborhoods throughout the entire city of Chicago."

Beginning today, the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) will begin accepting applications from existing property owners in the eligible areas to purchase up to two City-owned lots for \$1 each. The communities include:

- Auburn Gresham
- Austin
- Avalon Park
- Burnside
- Calumet Heights
- Chatham
- East Garfield
- East Side
- Englewood
- Fuller Park
- Hegewisch
- Humboldt Park
- Morgan Park
- New City
- North Lawndale
- Riverdale
- Roseland Pullman
- South Chicago
- South Deering
- South Shore
- Washington Heights
- West Englewood
- West Garfield
- West Pullman

Portions of Chicago Lawn, Douglas, Gage Park, Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing, Near West Side, Oakland, South Lawndale and Washington Park are also included.

Applications will be accepted through January 31, 2017, through the LargeLots.org web site.

To qualify as a buyer, an applicant must own property on the same block, be current on their property taxes and have no outstanding debt to the City, such as parking tickets or water bills, among other requirements. Lots proposed for purchase must be owned by the City, be vacant and have residential zoning. Each parcel is sold "as-is" via a quit claim deed.

The eligible areas were determined based on concentrations of City-owned land, market demand, and other factors. Previously, lots made available through the program were available in one or two communities per application period.

The Large Lots program began in 2014 in greater Englewood (Englewood, West Englewood, Washington Park, Woodlawn, and portions of New City, Fuller Park and Greater Grand Crossing), and was later expanded into East Garfield Park, Austin, Roseland, Pullman and Auburn Gresham communities. More than 550 lots have been sold since the program's inception.

All lot sales are intended to support residential uses, with most being planned as side yards, community gardens or landscaped open space. The lots were acquired mostly through property tax and demolition liens.

Among Large Lots sales to date, more than half are directly adjacent to buyers' existing properties; approximately 25 percent are less than five lots away.

An ongoing study by the U.S. Forest Service indicates that more than 40 percent of buyers make rapid improvements, such as installing fencing, removing trash and refuse, planting grass and foliage, and developing recreational and social amenities. Approximately 20 percent of the lots sold to date are actively gardened.

Residents surveyed for the study also report that the program has produced quieter and safer streets by reducing opportunities for vagrancy, loitering, and antisocial behavior.

Applications are submitted through the Large Lots web site at www.LargeLots.org. Application assistance is available during business hours at City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St., Room 1101.

For more information visit www.LargeLots.org.

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